

My father always found her.
His own shamus Sam Spade, he'd
gumshoe every cafe and drug store
in town, showing people her photos,
the one of her wearing pigtails,
an upsweep with gardenias behind
her ears, until someone identified her
and my father would find her, follow her
home, begging her to listen to him
until she'd say, Ray, don't give me
any more guff, else I'll call the police.
Then he'd lean against the lamppost
outside her apartment, chainsmoking
Lucky Strikes, and calling not Roxanne,
not Stella, but Margaret, Margaret,
until finally she let him in and
he'd kneel beside her feet and weep,
Please come back to me, his tears
streaking and salting up his
wire-rimmed Glenn Miller glasses.

How my father ruined me
for other men.

HEARTTHROBS

My Aunt Louise subscribed to Photoplay,
wrote fan letters, and kept a movie star
scrapbook for so long that she began to
hallucinate. Boldfaced lie, my father said,
but I believed my Aunt Louise's story that
the movie star Richard Egan had fallen
head-over-heels in love with her, drove
all the way from Hollywood to Colton,
California, to meet her Saturday afternoons
at the chili dog stand on Mt. Vernon Boulevard.
Just to hold her hand, nothing else,
my Aunt Louise, only 16, swore to her daddy,
a hot-headed Texas railroad man, who got out
his pistol and cleaned it and loaded it and
tried to sneak up on Richard Egan at the
chili dog stand to catch him in the act
with his little girl. But he always
got there too late, Richard Egan just
having driven away, just moments before,
back to L.A. in his red '54 Coupe de Ville.
Someday, someday, my grandpa would say,
I'm gonna get me that slippery son of a bitch,
and my father would say, Jesus Christ, if this

don't beat all, and go outside to grind his teeth. Later, on our way back home to Long Beach my father'd say if Louise were his girl, teen-ager or not, he'd get out his belt and wallop some sense into her butt, and I knew that he would, so I never told him when Robert Wagner began peeking into my bedroom window on nights the moon was full.

DOROTHY LAMOUR AND HEDY LAMARR PUT TOGETHER

To show my Uncle Darryl what he was missing, my Aunt Essie had my mother take a picture of her wearing the hula skirt and paper leis he sent her from Hawaii where he went after World War II for 2 years to help rebuild Pearl Harbor. My Aunt Essie also wore plum-red lipstick, gardenias in her long, curly hair, and a flesh-colored halter top that made her look naked while she leaned against the oak tree in her back yard in Oroville, California. My cousin Darlene, her daughter, and I giggled when we saw the picture which stayed pasted in our family album until the '50s when my mother decided that it was nasty and they'd been silly and a little drunk on beer that day. My Aunt Bessie died young of Lou Gehrig's and just before my mother died at 66 she said she sure wished she'd kept that picture because her sister Essie was prettier than Dorothy Lamour and Hedy Lamarr put together.

DIRECT OBJECT OF THE SUBJECTIVE CASE

The old guys, and some of the young guys, too, always wanted to buy a piece of our go-go fringe or a sequin, something to remember us by, they said, sometimes even wanting to buy for twice what we paid, our dancing tights, unwashed, and once this old guy at the Shimmy Shack wanted to buy my towel I used to wipe my breasts and forehead and back with